



## PRESS OFFICE

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### **Rhode Island Award Winners Honored at SBA's “Salute to Small Business” Luncheon**

**LINCOLN, RI** – On Friday, May 11, The U.S. Small Business Administration honored the 2018 Rhode Island SBA award winners at the annual “Salute to Small Business” luncheon, hosted by SCORE. Held at Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln, this year’s event was kicked off with spirited remarks from SBA District Director, Mark S. Hayward, and SCORE Chairman, Ed Gromada. Also addressing the near 300 attendees was SBA Regional Administrator, Wendell G. Davis, along with Lieutenant Governor, Daniel J. McKee; Secretary of State, Nellie M. Gorbea; and General Treasurer, Seth Magaziner, all of whom spoke to the vital impact small businesses have on the economy of Rhode Island.

The 2018 SBA awardees consisted of 21 small business owners and champions in 14 diverse categories, including Small Business Person of the Year awardee, Kelly Mendell, President of MIKEL. Located in Middletown, MIKEL is a woman-owned, undersea warfare company that specializes in products and services used in the defense industry. Mendell took over as president of MIKEL in 2008, and has been a client of SBA resource partners, SCORE and The Center for Women & Enterprise. Mendell has also taken advantage of the SBA’s Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants to help further her companies research and development capabilities.

Also honored was the National Subcontractor of the Year, Evans Capacitor Company, located in East Providence. Evans Capacitor, founded by Charles Dewey and David Evans, is a capacitor manufacturer and distributor working in the aerospace and defense sectors. Nominated for the award by Lockheed Martin, Evans continues to display innovation and quality that makes them a leader in their field.

“To have a Rhode Island small business be selected for a national award is a testament to the incredible small business community we have here,” said Mark S. Hayward, SBA district director. “The SBA’s Office of Advocacy reports that there are 29.6 million small businesses in the United States and the fact that of all of those businesses the best subcontractor was right here is truly remarkable and well deserved,” he added.

Of the 14 awards recognized, 10 were in the running for regional awards, with Rhode Island businesses securing three of those awards in the categories of Financial Services Champion, Veteran-Owned Small Business, and Woman-Owned Small Business. New England Financial Services Champion was awarded to Buck Harris, Vice-President of Community Lending for Community Investment Corporation (CIC). New England Veteran-Owned Small Business was awarded to John

Shepard, Founder and CEO of Veterans Assembled electronics (VAe). Also, New England Woman-Owned Small Business was awarded to Carol Dancer, President of Absorbent Specialty Products.

In a heartfelt moment, Cheryl Watkins Snead, Founder and CEO of Banneker Industries, was posthumously honored with the Rhode Island District Director award. Accepting on her behalf were her sisters Rene Payne and Linda Watkins, as well as protégé Junior Jabbie. Jabbie thanked the SBA for honoring Snead and proclaimed that the day was not to be a solemn one, but rather a celebration of the incredible leader, small business owner, trailblazer, and human being that Snead was.

Year after year the event proves to be a great venue to honor small business excellence in Rhode Island, and this year was no exception. The Rhode Island District Office of the SBA will begin accepting nomination for the 2019 Small Business Awards later this year. For more information contact Ryan Brissette, Public Information Officer, at [ryan.brisette@sba.gov](mailto:ryan.brisette@sba.gov) or 202-805-9168.

A complete list of Rhode Island SBA award winners can be found below.

### **SBA Awardees**

*Small Business Person of the Year* – Kelly Mendell, President of MIKEL (Middletown)

*National Subcontractor of the Year* – David Evans, President of Evans Capacitor Co. (East Providence)

*New England Financial Services Champion* – Buck Harris, V.P. of Community Lending, Community Investment Corporation (Providence)

*New England Veteran-Owned Small Business* – John Shepard, CEO of Veterans Assembled electronics (Providence)

*New England Woman-Owned Small Business* – Carol Dancer, President of Absorbent Specialty Products (Cumberland)

*RI District Director Award* – Posthumously Cheryl Watkins Snead, CEO of Banneker Industries (North Smithfield)

*RI Small Business Exporter* – AVTECH Software: Michael Sigourney, CEO; Anne Sigourney, CFO; Richard Grundy, President & COO (Warren)

*RI Small Business Manufacturer* – Donald Boyle, President of Jade Manufacturing Company (Warwick)

*RI Microenterprise* – Nancy Warner, Owner of The Worm Ladies of Charlestown (Charlestown)

*RI Minority-Owned Small Business* – Alba Rios, Owner of Tienda Alinary (Central Falls)

*RI Young Entrepreneur* – Johnny Luo M.D., President of Doctor's Choice (Warwick)

*RI Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned Small Business* – Gil's Appliances: Lisa Sienkiewicz, Co-owner; Gail Parella, Co-owner (Bristol)

*RI Home-Based Small Business* – Stony Hill Cattle Company: Kim Coulter, William Coulter, Nina Luchka, Josh Coutler; Partners (Charlestown)

*Joseph G.E. Knight Award for Entrepreneurial Excellence* – Christine Francis, Owner of Carmen & Ginger (Providence)

**About the U.S. Small Business Administration**

The U.S. Small Business Administration makes the American dream of business ownership a reality. As the only go-to resource and voice for small businesses backed by the strength of the federal government, the SBA empowers entrepreneurs and small business owners with the resources and support they need to start and grow their businesses. It delivers services to people through an extensive network of SBA field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations. To learn more, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).